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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, NATO, UNFCCC, DOHA, LATAM

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[¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary

Editorials focused on the discussion over the future of Deutsche Bahn's CEO Hartmut Mehdorn, the decision of Cologne's Mayor Schramma not to run again following the collapse of the building that carried the archive of the city, the government taking over a stake in Hypo Real Estate, and the upcoming summit meetings in Europe. Headlines centered on Deutsche Bahn, President Obama's invitation for a climate summit to Washington, and the debate over NATO's future secretary-general. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast *Heute* opened with a report on Cologne's Mayor Schramma, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast *Tagesschau* opened with a story on Deutsche Bahn's CEO Mehdorn.

[¶2.](#) New Afghanistan Strategy

All major German papers carried on Saturday front-page reports on President Obama's review of the strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, highlighting that the President is determined to deploy more soldiers and civilians to destroy al Qaida. The commentaries ranged from support to skepticism.

Frankfurter Rundschau analyzed under the headline "Obama's War": "The approach sounds familiar. What U.S. President Obama announced in Washington as the new Afghanistan strategy is a consistent exploitation of the experience of the U.S. army in Iraq over the last three years.... With the change of strategy, Obama has made the war in Afghanistan his top priority. It has not been as prominent on the U.S. public agenda like Iraq. However, the two fights have a common fate: they are terribly unpopular.... Victory or defeat in Afghanistan will be tied to Obama's name in the future. The new President wants to win this war with grenades, money and good words.... However, as successful as this strategy was in Iraq, it is not yet clear whether it can be copied to the conditions of the multiethnic country of Afghanistan with its

archaic tribal structures."

Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "The fanatics of the Taliban and al Qaida do not just threaten Afghanistan and Pakistan. The fact that Pakistan, particularly the secret service ISI, condones or even promotes the situation out of false reasoning is a scandal. It is right that Obama now offers Pakistan more help but also links it with the demand to finally end this dangerous game."

Berliner Zeitung wrote: "Obama's Afghanistan plan promotes corruption...Obama's nice plan might not be anything else but a gigantic stimulus package for corruption. Currently, there is something in almost every aid project for so-called Afghan partners.

What is true for Afghanistan is also true for Pakistan. Islamabad demonstrated already in the 1980s how you benefit from foreign assistance without improving the situation. A considerable part of the six billion dollars Washington supplied to jihadists at the time went into the pockets of the generals."

Under the headline "America leads," Tagesspiegel editorialized: "Why does no German politician deliver such a clear speech on Afghanistan? The West must do more to improve its security. Barack Obama openly says so - and he is prepared to take action despite the economic crisis and budget problems. Politicians in Europe only repeat what is popular in their countries, but they ignore the unpopular demand for more troops.... Once again it is becoming clear: Obama differs from Bush and his change of policy is

in Europe's interest. However, this does not necessarily mean that he will be a convenient president for his partners."

die tageszeitung commented on its front page: "Despite contrary statements, the goal will no longer be democracy and the rights of women. It is about the stabilization of a pro-American regime. The path to it will be Obama's war. Nobody should be under any illusions. Even if it cannot be ruled out that the U.S. can still win this war, there will be not less but more war for the time being."

FT Deutschland commented: "Particularly because the U.S. policy is now clearly closer to German policy, Germany must not stand aside but, given the new situation, consider a new strategy.... This is about a new concept, not a few more aid workers. Without it, the German claim to be the civilian lead nation will be at the sidelines in Afghanistan."

ZDF-TV's Heute remarked that the new Afghanistan strategy is "a clear renunciation of George Bush's policy. The core points of the new strategy are a stronger engagement in Pakistan and a massive increase in troops.... Behind Obama's change of course stands the realization that this war cannot be won with more troops alone. Obama must win whatever it takes."

13. NATO Summit Meeting

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung, "America is and remains the strongest power in the world, but it looks weaker than ever. In this situation, the United States has only one trump card: President Obama. Obama has turned into a projection screen of global wishes. Everywhere in the world, but primarily in Europe, millions of people are directing their hope and longings to this president. On this trip it is Obama's mission to bundle this energy and to implement his political goals and America's interests in the world. But this can only happen to a certain extent."

Tagesspiegel argued in a front-page editorial: "Those who do more have also greater influence on the strategy. President Obama is now jettisoning ideological ballast. The goal of the war [in Afghanistan] is no longer the establishment of a democracy but a state in which al-Qaida is unable to plan any more terrorist attacks. This is a break with the Bush strategy. This is also less than those Germans want who argue that the Bundeswehr is in Afghanistan to help set up a civil society in which all girls have a chance to attend school. In order to achieve his goals, Obama is willing to disrespect Pakistan's sovereignty. If Pakistan does not attack Al-Qaida along its border region to Afghanistan, he will do this. In some areas, Obama's policies might get really uncomfortable."

Regional daily *Rheinische Post* of Düsseldorf argued: "Chancellor Merkel is quite happy in the international arena where she can get a certain distance from the bickering at home. But caution: this time the summit will not turn into an Angela Merkel show such as in Heiligendamm in 2007. At that time, the government leaders were Bush, Chirac, and Blair and they were about to be replaced. The new guild around Barack Obama and Nicolas Sarkozy and the new powers China and Brazil, will not allow the Merkel system to develop. Especially Obama will prove that he is not thinking of giving in as the number one in the world only because the crisis spilled over from the U.S. to us. He will use all his power to implement his agenda of greater demand, more debt, and better controls. Merkel can counter this only by demonstrating her perseverance and persistence."

Financial Times Deutschland opined: "It seems as if the German government could await the NATO summit in a relaxed manner. Finally, the Americans have copied the German approach in many respects. The civilian reconstruction is now becoming the focus of the NATO mission. But this is putting Germany under pressure. For the German government it is now more urgent than ever to answer the question of which goals it is pursuing, and with what means. For the United States, the answer is now clear: Barack Obama wants to win the war with all means, destroy al-Qaida and the Taliban and rebuild Afghanistan to such a degree that a return for terrorists is impossible. Seven years after the beginning of the war, this conflict is now entering its hot stage. Western resolve will be one of the strongest weapons. And what about Germany? What is at issue is not a few more aid workers but a new strategic plan. Without such a plan, Germany, which once reclaimed the civilian leading role in this mission, will totally fall by the wayside in the Hindu Kush."

¶4. New NATO Secretary-General

Frankfurter Allgemeine had this to say: "Everywhere we will get nice photos with the chancellor in the center. And everywhere we will see that the crisis does not forge together all participants. But NATO's party mood is marred not only because of the idea that it could still fail in Afghanistan, even though Barack Obama is now heading the U.S. administration. All of a sudden, the NATO summit will also be burdened by a discussion over the next NATO secretary-general. Turkey has turned into the mouthpiece of the 'irritation of Islamic countries' (i.e. of the non-NATO members) by the candidacy of Denmark's government leader Rasmussen who uncompromisingly sided with the freedom of the press in the controversy over the Mohammed caricatures. This should be reason for thought for all those who still rave about the wonderful 'bridging function' of Turkey to the rest of the Islamic world."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung argued: "NATO pretends to be more than a military alliance. It also claims to be a community that shares the same values. Following Turkey's Premier Erdogan's attacks on Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen, the Alliance now has the opportunity to prove to what extent this is true...and it should not miss this opportunity. At issue is no longer who is going to be the next NATO Secretary-General but the credibility of the Alliance is at stake. If the highest civilian job in NATO is not given to Rasmussen because the Islamic nations hate him, then the Alliance would be morally giving itself up. The defense of the freedom of the press and freedom of opinion is not a disqualification. On the contrary, it should be one of the preconditions for the job. If NATO wants to remain loyal to itself, it must reject Erdogan's attacks and appoint Rasmussen without delay. Everything else would create the impression that NATO would consider giving in to pressure from countries that ignore human and freedom rights."

In the view of Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, "Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan likes to play the mouthpiece for the Islamic world. Erdogan's objections [to Rasmussen] are not without weight especially with a view to the NATO engagement in Afghanistan. But Erdogan's contribution is also a contribution to the election campaign in Turkey. Ankara will hardly go so far as to veto Rasmussen. President Abdullah Gul already found words of praise for the Danish premier."

¶5. Bonn UNFCCC

German primetime TV newscasts and most major papers carried prominent reports on the UN Climate policy, highlighting that "U.S. President Obama pushes for climate protection" (Sueddeutsche front-page headline). Berliner Zeitung lead headline said: "Obama launches Green Change" and added in its intro: "President Obama does not just focus on curbing the financial crisis, but also wants to exert more pressure in the fight against climate change."

ARD-TV's primetime Tagesschau reported: "Special Envoy Todd Stern is the face of the new American climate protection policy. With Stern, the U.S. government does not only begin participating in UN climate negotiations after years of being on the sidelines, it is also taking the initiative by inviting leading economic countries to an

environment meeting in Washington in April.... Although the Americans were sitting in the back rows during the conference, their message is heard: the U.S. wants to cut 17 percent of today's carbon dioxide emissions by 2020. This is a first step." ARD-TV's and ZDF-TV's primetime newscasts show Stern saying that "we now have a U.S. government that is serious [about fighting climate change]. We see the problem. We will spend 80 billion on green technologies. This is very robust."

Berliner Zeitung commented: "If Obama could do what he wanted to do, there would not be much to negotiate between Europeans and Americans. The U.S. President is pushing for a green change of the economy, which would sustainably transform the United States. He does not just underscore this with symbolic gestures, like the assignment of Todd Stern to the UN climate conference in Bonn shows, but also by taking concrete steps. With his 800 billion economic stimulus program, Obama has set the course for an ecological renewal."

Regional daily Rheinpfalz of Ludwigshafen editorialized: "The situation concerning climate protection can be compared to the big financial meltdown.... The European Union only recently announced its climate protection ideas during the spring summit. In America, it becomes clear that President Obama will not get his plans through the Senate in time for Copenhagen. This could endanger the international treaty. However, it must be clear to all of us that there is a difference between the financial world and the real one. The damage done to the financial world can be repaired. The damage it would cause to the climate inaction cannot yet be estimated."

16. Doha--Arab Summit

According to Frankfurter Rundschau, "most of the Arab potentates seem to have realized that they have to unite if they do not want to play another act in their play of absolute chaos. Such as in normal life, nothing has a greater uniting effect than a common enemy and a common outrage. And there are more of those things today than there were in the past. New Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu would not have been enough to bring the Arab states back to the table again. The second bogeyman is Iranian President Ahmadinejad with his grandiloquent nuclear plans. And the Arab league is not considering the global arrest warrant against Sudanese President al-Bashir a Western attempt to make a global example of Sudan's president. But time will tell whether the current outrage can be translated into a long-term political unity. The growing unrest continues to smolder because of the 22 state leaders, five will definitely not attend this summit."

17. Progressive Leaders' Conference

Frankfurter Allgemeine reported under the headline: "Sanctions on Cuba Remain," that "according to Vice President Joe Biden, the U.S. administration plans to maintain economic sanctions on Cuba. Following the Progressive Leaders' Conference in Chile, journalists asked Biden whether Washington planned to lift sanctions on the communist Cuba, Biden said: 'No.' He added: 'We think that the people in Cuba should determine their fate themselves and that they should live in freedom and with the intention for economic growth. But Cuba would not be the greatest challenge for the southern hemisphere. This would be the economy,' he said."